

[Not all the manufacturers had machinery]

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Subject-The Shoemaker of Lynn

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2/1/39 /See Sections 7A and 8 [? ?]

“Not all the manufacturers had machinery in their shops, time a the Ironclad Lockout in the 70's. Some ‘uld jest buy stock an' have it cut, and then send the cut parts ta be made in some other place where they had machinery. Them places wuz called the makin, shops. There wuz a dozen ‘r more of 'em in Lynn then.

“Sometimes them manufacturers as had their shoes put together in the makin' shops, would give the leather out ta cutters ta take home ta cut, and they'd give the stitchin' ta the cutters' wives, ta stitch on the machines they had ta home. Jest ordnary sewin' machines like anyone's got in their homes.

“There wuz all hand lasters at that time.

“The McKay machine, that machine that stitched the soles ta uppers, weighed a ton then. Men made a lotta money runnin' it. It made a lotta noise. There wuz a lotta complications ta it. It din't run sa fast as it does today, and there wuz a pot a tar by the side a it ta wax the thread. Today the thread is waxed right in the machine. 2 “There wuzn't no trimmin, machine then. The trimmer had a knife ta cut off the waste.

"Then there wuz taps on the inside of a shoe.

"The edgeseffin' machine used ta be heavy too, and it required a long reach ta run one. The part a the machine that shines the edges gotta be heated. Years ago that wuz done by a candle set in a can; later they used gas. By dang, it wuz one a the edge setters candles that started the great Lynn fire in 1887. Anyways that's what people said. " Now the edge setters light's right in the machine.

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THE LYNN FIRE - 1887

"The Lynn Fire wuz in 1887, jest a year 'fore I wuz married. Most people say it started from an edgsetter's candle, in a shop down on Blake St.] Spread all over the downtown business section in no time and it burned down a lotta shops. It swept down as fur as the beach, and the gas company plant and got on the wharf.

"It burned down a lotta old ideas about shoe makin' too, fur soon's the fire wuz over, some a the old timers took the insurance they got on their business and retired. If they started up again, this time most likely in one of them temporary places put up down on Washington St., they installed machinery. The fire done away with the small shops that still did most of their makin' by hand, or them shops that jest cut and had the rest a the shoes made in the makin' shops. New people went in the business and they all went in fur makin' shoes in the modern way.

"There sure wuz excitement. All the people that lived down Lewis St. way and near the heart a the city, wuz scared a bein' burned out and they tried ta save what they could. One woman that lived down there throwed her feather mattress outa the winda and then she couldn't carry it so she had ta leave it when the fire got too close. 4 "I got a wheel barrow and wheeled a trunk that my sister's husband had papers from his business in. I wheeled that wheel barrow down ta the beach fur there is where everybody went.

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"I stayed there with it, almost till night, when it looked like it wuz safe ta take it ta my brother's house up on Franklin St. When I got to the top a Nahant St. hill with it, I saw a railroad express man drivin' home and I got him ta deliver it. My brother give him \$10, fur he sure wuz glad ta get it.

The beach wuz full a people with their belongin's they could bring, that day a the fire. But nobody lost nothin'. Fur there wuz a fund ta give people back what they lost and ya know there wuz some a that left over. And the manufacturers got insurance.

Shoe business din't let up none either. Them shops as wuz burned, had ta throw their business ta other shops fur a time, but shoes kept right on bein' made. Not many months after the fire ya'd never knowed one been here.

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A CRIPPLE CUTTER

'did ya ever hear of a 'cripple' cutter?

"He's a fella that the boss picks out from the cutters, ta cut all the extra pieces that gets damaged. Say a stitcher ruined one part of a pair a shoes. Well, the cripple cutter 'uld cut that part over an' match it up with the rest a the shoe.

"Them shoes as is damaged when they're bein made are called 'cripples'. 'cripples.' They always go back ta the cripple cutter, an' he looks around the cuttin' room fur some leather ta match the leather in the cripple shoes, an' then cuts what new parts are needed.

"Another job a the cripple cutter is ta keep a eye on the other cutters an' kinda figure on the kinda work they did, ya wuz jest about next ta the boss in a way, but ya din't do no hirin' or firin'.

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“Once I wuz a cripple cutter an' I was watchin' a fella cut that din't know nothing about it Well, the boss wanted him fired in the worst kinda way, but fur some reason he din't want ta do the firin'. 2 “‘Now you tell him ta give in his time,’ he tol me. But I tol him, ‘ You hired him, din't you? Well then You fire him. That ‘aint in my line’. I wan't goin ta fire a man.”